



Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)

What is Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)?

Equine infectious anemia (EIA) is an incurable, infectious disease caused by a virus that can affect horses, donkeys, asses and other equine. This virus destroys red blood cells and is spread through blood-to-blood contact, not through close proximity or casual contact. The virus can be transmitted from an infected equine to a “clean” equine by biting flies, the use of unsterilized or contaminated medical instruments, or through a blood transfusion. This disease does not affect humans.

Depending on the equine animal’s disease resistance, the virus’ ability to cause disease and stress factors, EIA can appear in one of three forms:

- Acute
- Chronic
- Inapparent



Acute

An equine responding acutely may develop fever, go off feed or die suddenly. Acute responses generally occur seven to 30 days after initial exposure to the virus. The animal may test negative for EIA for 16 to 42 days because its immune system has not yet produced detectable antibodies.

Chronic

Chronically infected equine test positive and may develop symptoms, such as weight loss, weakness, anemia and swelling of the lower legs, chest and abdomen. Symptoms subside, but may reoccur.

Inapparent

Inapparent infected equine show no outward symptoms, but test positive for the disease. These animals pose the greatest danger of spreading EIA because they show no outward signs of disease creating a risk for unsuspecting equine owners.

Texas Law

Since September 1, 1999, the 76th Texas Legislature’s House Bill 1732 has been in effect. This bill created the EIA program in Texas

This Texas law requires that ALL equine animals, except zebras, eight months of age or older have a negative EIA test within the previous 12 months before undergoing any change-of-ownership with the exemptions listed separately. TAHC regulations **DO** require zebras entering Texas to have had a negative EIA test within the previous 12 months and a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) also known as a health certificate, issued within the past 45 days unless they are moving between approved zoos. All zebras, including those from Texas, must have had a negative EIA test within the previous 12 months, when entering shows, fairs, exhibitions or other assemblies.

Failure to comply with the law is a Class “C” misdemeanor. The Texas Animal Health Commission’s (TAHC) regulations also were amended to coincide with this law.

Exempt from the change-of-ownership testing requirement:

- Nursing foals, transferred with their dam, if the dam has tested negative for EIA within the previous 12 months
- Equine less than eight months old

Q: Can untested equine be tested at a market?

A: Yes, but call the market before you haul. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has specific guidelines for “off-site” EIA labs at sale facilities. Some markets may not have an approved EIA laboratory on-site. EIA test results may be available in only a few hours.

If the market does not have a laboratory, an accredited veterinarian can draw a blood sample from the animal and send it to any of Texas’ many USDA-approved laboratories. Results are generally available in three to five days.

Q: What if my equine tests positive?

A: You may opt to have the equine animal retested by requesting a retest in writing. At that time, another blood sample will be drawn by state/federal personnel only and sent to the State-Federal Laboratory for confirmatory testing.

If the positive results were revealed at the livestock market or at another site away from the premise of origin, you must take your equine home under quarantine and under a restricted movement permit, called a USDA form VS 1-27. The VS 1-27 may be issued by an accredited veterinarian or authorized state and federal personnel. All equine on the premise with the positive animal will be initially restricted.

If the confirmatory test is positive, equine shall be identified with a “74-A” freeze or fire-brand on the upper left shoulder or neck within 10 days unless the animal is euthanized. (See picture of 74-A brand on the next page)

Infected equine animals may only move otherwise to an approved diagnostic or research facility, or be returned to the premise of origin.

Q: What about an EIA quarantine? What's needed for quarantine release?

A: All equine animals that shared the premise with, or were otherwise exposed to the EIA-infected equine, will be placed under quarantine and must be tested for EIA. TAHC personnel may draw the blood sample and send it to the State-Federal Laboratory at no charge, or an accredited veterinarian may draw the sample at the owner's expense.

TAHC personnel will conduct an epidemiological investigation to determine the equine's movement history, when they have commingled with other equine animals, insect control measures, and other information relating to the spread of the disease.

Quarantine release depends on two factors:

1. The last infected equine on the premise must be moved from the site under a TAHC-issued VS 1-27 permit to one of the restricted destinations previously discussed, or euthanized by the owner's veterinarian.
2. At least 60 days after last exposure to the infected animal(s), the equine remaining on the premise must be retested. If all tests are negative, the TAHC will release the quarantine.

Q: Can I keep my equine if it tested positive for EIA?

A: Because an infected equine is considered to be the only reservoir of this disease, it is best to remove the animal from the equine population. If it must be kept, the animal is to be permanently quarantined at least 200 yards from other equine. All other equine on the premise will also remain under quarantine until the infected animal is isolated or they are tested negative 60 days after removal. A quarterly inspection of the quarantined premises will be

performed by the TAHC for as long as the infected equine remains on the premise to ensure the animal has not left or commingled with other equine.

Q: What do we need for Texas shows, fairs, trail rides, rodeos or any other equine-related assemblies held within the state?

A: Texas equine participating in Texas events must have a negative EIA test, performed by a private practitioner, within the past 12 months. The EIA test document completed by a vet is called a VS 10-11 and is official proof of testing. Horse owners should keep this document handy when traveling with the horse.

Q: Who is responsible for ensuring that equine animals participating in events have been tested and are accompanied by an EIA document?

A: The person or group in charge of the event is responsible for ensuring that all equine animals are accompanied with a valid VS 10-11 EIA test document. The person and/or persons responsible for checking the VS 10-11 test document should look for the test date and the animal's description and compare it to the equine animal being hauled. Boarding facilities, training stables and pastures must ensure that all equine have a valid negative test.

Q: What is an Equine Passport?

A: Equine may enter Texas and move within the state on an equine passport or ID card, in lieu of a CVI (health certificate). The passport is valid for 6 months and eliminates the need for a new health certificate every 30 to 45 days.

The negative test chart (VS 10-11) must be presented with the passport, when requested. The passport is not valid, however, for entry into Texas pari-mutuel race tracks.



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